Segment 1C – Overview of The Iowa Professional Development Model continued

In this part of Bev Showers' overview of the Model, she introduces the ongoing cycle, of providing training/learning opportunities for staff development.

Providing training and learning opportunities—not once--but in an ongoing cycle as people need it, and driven by feedback from collaborative teacher teams saying, This part we've got in place; and this part we are not getting; it's not working; we need a new session on it, we need to discuss this with the people who are teaching us this. It becomes a very interactive process once you get inside that little cycle. And thus the critical need for schools and districts to understand this. It is a jointly driven process. It is one of the best examples of what [Michael] Fullen calls the combination top-down bottom-up interacting, with the top side saying on now we here you and the bottom side saying the students can't do this but can do that we need training here but not there and this back and forth, back and forth. Fullen makes a very powerful argument that the top-down, bottom-up argument is dead, and if it isn't, it should be. That it is simply not productive. That the whole continuum needs each other. He makes this point in his books and also in a recent Ed Leadership article where he talks about distributed leadership and how critical it is for all parts of the continuum in the education business to be aware, informed, and cooperatively working together on this. It's a bigger task than either top or bottom can do.

So as you know, the leadership part keeps popping up in every part of this model. Once you get to this cycle now—so you have set goals, studied your data, you have selected content and providers, you have designed a process to enable people to learn new content, and now you enter this cycle, and this is an ongoing cycle that happens all year at the school and district level. So you have learning opportunities, which may or may not be in the school, because there are a lot of small schools—as you have made very clear to me—they may be in training/learning opportunities that are at a distance from their schools. But at the minute the training setting is finished they are back in their schools— and now I am just saying schools, not districts, because this is where the crunch comes, and it is a new time issue for schools. What we know fairly well is that if teachers don't have pretty formal, sacred set-aside times to work collaboratively on implementing their new learning and working out the issues involved in implementing it and adjusting it and modifying it for their settings, they don't get much in the way of implementation. If we lose in implementation we could kiss goodbye this initial premise, which is that this is all about student learning. Because if we go through all this activity of setting goals, studying data, selecting content, setting up our training design, and then don't get an implementation, we should have spent the money on faculty parties. It would have been a better use of resources [*laughter*]. And I am not saying you shouldn't have both…

But I am just saying that this is where the crunch comes. You learn new things but learning to teach is not the same thing is not same thing as learning to be a bank teller, where your training setting is exactly like your workplace. I mean that is what you call

parallel transfer: I learned on this type of computer, standing at my desk, with a supervisor looking over my shoulder, and anytime I make a mistake says—No, it's function F4, it's function F4, getting immediate corrective feedback every step of the way. So moving into my bank teller's position doesn't require a great deal of adaptation. I am not saying it is simple. I am saying the transfer task is a simple one in training settings like that. Even for pilots the transfer task is relatively simple. Their simulators they train in look exactly like the airplanes they sit down in. And they train to automaticity; they do it over and over until it is second nature. They can have a blinding headache and they still reach automatically for that lever—hopefully. But you take what happens in a training situation for teachers. [For example, training in a reading strategy] these are four different strategies that really seem to have a significant impact on student comprehension of text. Some of them seem to work better for nonfiction text than for fiction text and of course if you move to more complex selections and longer ones with older children, you are probably going to have to put in a cooperative activity and make sure that….

Okay, you get the idea, right? There are so many if-thens and you need to watch for… and you may have some students who are struggling, then be sure to think of this accommodation…. And you have about 150 variables circling in your head as you step into the workplace, that workplace transfer task is huge. It looks nothing like our training setting. Thus the incredible need for teacher collaboration time, for teachers to sit down and say, Okay, we tried this…we've got these kids and these kids and these kids are sitting there clueless and now we need a feedback loop where these conversations in the collaborative team go straight back to whoever is providing training service. We need a review, or we need to work out an alternative here, because in our setting with our students, we are going to need a modification here. So to get an implementation it is critical to have this loop going on constantly. And then of course the ongoing data collection at the school level where decisions have to be made, if you are not getting some measure of the variable you are trying to effect with your students, whether it is reading comprehension, math problem-solving, or whatever your goal was, if you are not getting some regular intermittent feedback that tells you OK how are the students doing now, it is impossible for you to make judgments about how to modify the implementation. You are in no position to say, we had better increase the amount of this we are doing. We are doing too much of this. This is overkill. Let's change our implementation plan. You are in no position to make those decisions if you are not getting ongoing data from your students about how they are doing.

Program Evaluation
Program evaluation in the State of Iowa is one thing that is going to be prominent at this point. That is, ITBS and ITED scores are going to be looked at regarding student proficiency. So now we are back to those federal goals. These things are going to be pretty common. In addition, schools and districts have to decide, as they look at program evaluation, it is critical. Because what they are saying is that at that level it is working, or it isn't. We are going to continue working or do we need to change course? And you must decide how long to give it to work. If you don't want to start and stop something every year that is radically different but you also need to be making judgments: What

information do you need if any beyond ITBS and ITED to make those judgments? So this one falls heavily both on the district- and the school-level people, saying how are we going to make a decision at the end? We are going to invest enormous energy in doing this.